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Suffering in Fashion: Relationships between Suffering, The Production of Garments and Their Appropriation as Fashionable Items

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**SUFFERING IN FASHION: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SUFFERING, THE  
PRODUCTION OF GARMENTS AND THEIR APPROPRIATION AS FASHIONABLE  
ITEMS**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**The University of Huddersfield**

**January 2012**

## **1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am greatly indebted to my supervisors Dr Pammi Sinha and Dr Viv Burr for support and advice. Also to Penny Macbeth, Alison Armstrong, Hilary Hollingworth, Irene Spink, Kevin Laycock for their support and advice.

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### **3. ABSTRACT**

In this commentary, I discuss several publications that explored relationships between suffering, the production of garments and their appropriation as fashionable items. The aim of the research was to investigate the role of suffering in initiating change within the creation and consumption of fashionable clothes. Suffering through pain, anguish or distress is an extreme affliction. Pushing something to its limits of endurance, making it suffer, can undermine order and to survive, it needs to be reassembled in a different way. This concept is somewhat akin to Charles Darwin's ideas about evolution (1859). A quote attributed to him declared: "It's not the strongest of the species that survive nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change" (Megginson, 1963, p.4). His work coined the phrase "Survival of the fittest" (Peel, 1992, p.143), introducing the idea that survival is a struggle against environmental change in nature and a species evolves through a process of mutation and retention known as natural selection. In the commercial struggle for survival many fashionable styles are discarded while some remain durable due to their adaptability to new trends and ideas. These could be described as the 'fittest' styles surviving through their re-assemblance each season, sustaining the marketable cycle.

Suffering in the ways clothes are worn and produced was examined through a number of approaches. Object based research investigated the design and manufacture of fashionable garments. Action based research and semi-structured interviews in a design environment considered the fashion designer's responses to suffering and the changes it can initiate in production and consumption. The research findings indicate that suffering within the fashion industry can be a positive attribute that may be regarded as a part of life, a prerequisite for hope, a force for change and a source of creativity. It can influence the way clothes are produced and the skills necessary to produce them. A model depicting the connection between suffering and fashion is posited as a tentative theory suggesting there is a spiral relationship: changes in fashion production and consumption resulting from suffering evolve into a spiral of further suffering impacting on future fashion design and production.

#### **4. RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND RATIONALE**

In this section, I will reflect upon how the research began and introduce the reader to some of the key issues and concepts that will be discussed in more depth later. The present research led me back to some of the themes I had explored in my undergraduate and postgraduate work. I had been interested in suffering relating to conflict between the presentation of fashionable public and private selves. I decided to revise, rewrite and update some of this material and began to recognize parallels in these ideas with the notion that through suffering, the human body can effect positive changes in the way it is “fashioned” (Entwistle, 2000). This was explored in Wallerstein’s (1997, p.135) comments about the use of emaciated, starved bodies in 1990’s fashion advertisements: “Their dark emotions, erotic undertones, and the intensities of expressions suggest romantic notions of tragic beauty and ecstatic experiences achieved through physically destructive expenditures”. The malnourished body suggests a form of enactment linked to suffering through the wearing of fashionable garments. This then connects to the skills that need to be developed or revisited in order to produce garments that accentuate the skinny bodies.

A teaching and learning grant (2007) that funded object based research in the costume archives at the Victoria and Albert Museum started much of my research. I was interested in exploring how fashion garments had distorted the human body. Vincent (2009, p.XV1) said: “We will never be able to answer satisfactorily the why of fashion: Why did Victorian women adopt crinolines? Why did Elizabethans' favour ruffs?” The ‘why’ of fashion was not my initial interest; I wanted to explore the ‘how’ of fashion through manufacturing techniques in fashion garments that reshaped the body and compare these with methods created by my students when developing their collections. From this research, I developed paper 1, which inspired a pedagogic support for students’ explorations into cut and construction and emphasized the suffering, moral and health questions that arise from distorting the body.

Throughout my research and literature review I discovered that much of the wider definition of suffering can be identified through religion and spirituality as this has helped to give a meaning to life and has formed the basis of many civilizations. I also identified it in other disciplines such as social sciences, arts and literature, psychology, biology, philosophy and in health. In this commentary I emphasize how ideas about suffering can be transposed into a fashion context. I therefore attempt to define suffering in relation to this. I also emphasize that in the context of this research suffering is not a catch-all word to describe notions of distress. In defining the meaning of suffering I have struggled between dictionary definitions and their interpretation throughout. The Oxford English Dictionary describes suffering as: “The state of undergoing pain, distress or hardship” (oxforddictionaries.com, 2011). The Penguin English Dictionary describes it as: “To experience or be forced to endure something unpleasant.” (Allen, 2001, p.893). Both descriptions imply that suffering includes both physical and mental pain. I therefore recognize that I need to defend the grouping together of disparate experiences and different stratas of suffering that influence the design and manufacture of fashionable garments.

Physical and mental suffering can manifest itself in mild to intolerable degrees. The extent of suffering and frequency of its occurrence within the papers does not necessarily determine its intensity and this is discussed in section 6a. In those who suffer or observe suffering, attitudes towards it can vary widely. This can depend on whether it is considered beneficial or hopeless, preventable or inevitable etc. It may be argued that its meaning and significance needs to be judged in relation to its impact on the individual, group or society as a whole. Arguably, there exist different forms, or stratas of suffering some of which may be said to be more severe than others.

A piece of empirical research might have set out to identify different stratas of suffering within the fashion industry and how these can influence change. The submitted publications however did not set out to do this. The analysis in this commentary can only therefore offer indicators of levels of suffering by considering new literature that measures it. This is then related to the individual papers in order to consider the

significance of different levels of suffering for changes in fashion production and consumption. The literature relating to the assessment of suffering (Algosphere, 2012; Amato, 1990; Beach et al, 2012; Brandli et al, 2002; Dawkins, 1985; Frazee, 2011; Levin, 1988; Mayerfield, 1999; Sensky, 2010; Scarry, 1987) mainly considers health, religion, law, old-age and suffering in animals. However, it was considered to offer few ideas that can be usefully transposed to the area of suffering in fashion. The majority of this literature took a quantitative approach, focusing on developing objective measures of degrees of experienced suffering, which is not what I set out to do in the publications and is also difficult to do retrospectively. The measures themselves are therefore not helpful in assessing the relative severity of different stratas of suffering in fashion. Nevertheless, Frazee (2011) offers a model which is helpful in assessing the stratas of suffering within the papers and this is discussed further in section 6a.

The degrees of suffering within the submitted publications vary in their levels of severity however I have taken the perspective that different types of suffering may be a source for change in the fashion industry and the two examples that follow illustrate how they transpose themselves into fashion contexts. The mental suffering discussed in paper 4 is arguably relatively mild, although it can be frequently experienced. The fashion student suffers embarrassment when the tutor refers to their finished garment as 'dress-makey' (Burman, 1999). This term is intentionally derogatory in order to help the student understand the importance of acquiring professional standards in garment production. In comparison the suffering described in paper 2 is the arguably more severe and less frequent emotional (mental) pain of bereavement. Its impact on the dressmaker and the consumer is analysed in the descriptions of the exaggerated mourning dress appropriated by Victorian society. This demanded a complexity of manufacture skills that adhered to the sartorial etiquette mourning demanded. The factors of frequency and extent are considered in relation to the severity of the various forms of suffering dealt with in each paper, again discussed further in section 6. I also emphasize how different stratas of suffering are experienced and tested in relation to change and evolution in skills for specific users/makers in the fashion industry. This incrementally demonstrates how the contribution to knowledge began to manifest. It should also be noted that



despite defining different stratas of suffering within each publication the avenue I explore in this commentary is its overall impact on in the production and consumption of fashionable clothes.

Within the publications the different types of suffering and their impact on change in fashion includes; suffering through wearing uncomfortable clothing; the marginalization and prejudice that can be induced by wearing fashionable clothing; the suffering created by changes in society which impact on fashion; suffering caused by conflict between new and traditional technologies and the suffering endured by those who face opposition when choosing fashion as a career. These examples of types of physical and mental pain, share the same basic premise and can be instigators of change in the way fashionable clothing is designed, produced and consumed. Suffering in fashion thus includes:

- The physical pain and discomfort of wearing fashionable clothing.

The human body has been the subject of numerous investigations from sociologists, theorists and fashion designers. In fashion it is put to task; starved, tattooed, pierced, reshaped, resized, redesigned, represented and controlled by the interventions of the human mind. We can therefore reshape our bodies with clothes in order to present our fashionable ideals yet this can often cause levels of physical pain and discomfort. As Vincent (2009, p.241) said: "Clothes take the ordinary human body and fashion it into something remarkable". As I discuss at the beginning of this section I arrived at the word suffering through the research in paper 1. This explored the frequency and different strata's of physical pain the consumer is prepared to suffer through wearing fashionable clothes that distort the body, (Glover, 2008; Koda, 2001; Riberio, 1986; Steele, 2001; Van Der Does, 1980). The impact of suffering on the designer, manufacturer and the consumer was analyzed in relation to the degrees of discomfort the consumer is prepared to endure. By considering the garment construction techniques employed suggestions were then made for the garments to be adapted in order for them to be more comfortable.

- Mental anguish leading to self-recreation through fashionable clothing

Mental anguish was particularly discussed in papers 7 and 8. Following Goffman's (1959) theories about the presentation of self, I explored the idea that the presentation of the gendered or glamorized self is essentially a social performance constructed to communicate a physical and sartorial message. This disguises the stigmas associated with the marginalized persona presented in everyday life. Fashionable dress can conceal much about different levels of anxiety and suffering as it can be appropriated as a visual canvas to proclaim who we want to be. Clothing that conceals mental suffering through social displacement, can eventually be appropriated as a mainstream fashion trend. For instance until 1967, when homosexuality in the UK was decriminalized, gay men had to conceal their sexuality due to fear of imprisonment. They resorted to subtle dress codes to communicate their sexuality to others and these included wearing suede shoes or red ties (Cole, 2000). By the year 2000 commentators noted: "Gay style actually sets trends. It's what straight people take fashion from" (Cole, 2000, p.214). Dress can therefore challenge pre-conceived concepts through fashionable appropriation. This is reinforced by Wallerstein (1998) who discusses how emaciated models in 1990's fashion advertising suggested not a wasted, tragic life but a disciplined body that was defiant and proud.

- The hardship of workers in failing industries, which includes suffering through conflict between traditional and new technologies.

I emphasize this throughout the publications, particularly papers 4, 5, 6 and 9. Both discuss different levels of suffering and conflict between traditional and evolving technologies and argue a case for the continued appreciation of traditional skills in garment manufacturing. Paper 6 discusses the conflict suffered by the pattern cutter whose role is overshadowed by the seemingly more dominant and glamorous role of the fashion designer. The different hardships suffered by workers in UK fashion production are discussed in paper 9 which examines how Skillset, the UK Government sponsored initiative to develop skills in industry and education, have recently met with educationalists on fashion courses ([www.skillset-uk.org](http://www.skillset-uk.org), 2011). Concerned with preserving skills in industry (Brown, 2011), their intention was to investigate ways of

working together in order to develop fashion curricula that incorporate more traditional technical skills. The idea evolved as the UK government and industrialists began to recognize the loss of UK manufacture to overseas production. This exposes the redundancy of skills the UK manufacturing industry has suffered, through which the Government as a survival strategy established Skillset. Two questions emerge here, (a) whether the loss of skills, as manufacturing in the UK has declined, has left the UK fashion industry vulnerable to the shifting fortunes of the global production system and (b) whether this influences how clothes are constructed and the skills that need to be maintained or developed in order to produce them.

- Suffering, loss and hardship induced by changes in society that both threaten and subsequently influence the design and production of fashionable clothing and the testing of appropriate technologies.

Paper 3 emphasized how fashion can mirror change in society. The example of the way fashion suffered due to the withdrawal of essential manufacturing resources in World War Two and the economic recession begun in 2008 was discussed and the positive fashion initiatives that resulted from this, such as 'make do and mend', were emphasized. Suffering can be induced through the different levels of stress placed on the nerves of designers and manufacturers who need to test new, or revive traditional, methods and techniques. This is referred to in papers 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9. The fashion industry must respond to change quickly because, unlike a building, which can be designed and constructed to function for many years (Hodge and Mears, 2006), fashionable clothing is commercially only made to be worn and function for a short period of time, usually six months (Jenkyn-Jones, 2002; Kawamura, 2006). The industry's tight deadlines and fast moving product cycles (Jenkyn-Jones, 2002; Renfrew and Renfrew, 2009) invariably mean that creativity often needs to be forced from the designer to meet consumer demand. The combination of a highly-strung designer with the ruthless needs of commerce can be a breeding ground for volatile emotions. The designer suffers a great deal of stress, as they are responsible for inventing the product on which the financial success of a company rests. This is also identified in the suffering at the wider level of the fashion industry including

manufacturing, due to the stress involved in creating a product with a short lifespan. This generates a pressurized working environment and results in a fast turnaround of staff, yet it can be positive as it brings in a constant supply of fresh ideas, which will change and move the product forward.

Much of the research throughout the commentary and submitted papers focuses upon the womenswear market although menswear is discussed. Through ethnographic and case study research with fashion students I identified that only a small proportion choose to design menswear and a small percentage of students who apply to study fashion are male (UCAS Statistics, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012). There has been a lot of research into gender and fashion over the past thirty years (Beward, 1995; Brownmillar, 1984; Butler, 1990; Crane, 2001; Davis, 1994; Jones, 2004; Kawamura, 2005; Tseelon, 2001; Wilson, 1985; Wilson, 2005). From this literature questions arise such as; do women suffer more than men through their life experiences. As discussed in paper 8, males who cross dress in order to mask the suffering endured through their marginalized personas in everyday life also appropriate the suffering of the women. Tseelon (1995) argues, "This is why transvestites who dress genuinely to pass as women are doubly threatening. They give up a privileged position by crossing over to the devalued realm of femininity, and by so doing they challenge the system of sexual difference." (p.90).

I would argue that the womenswear focus within the papers emphasizes gender imbalances within the fashion industry. It illustrates a growing tension between those who feel they are discriminated against and those who feel somewhat favoured by a perception, largely unexamined, that men are better designers than women and that the history of fashion, has been dominated by the male gaze. (Wilson, 2005, p.1). I considered how the different approaches of male and female designers, was emphasized within the papers. A male designer such as Dior, discussed in paper 1 (Martin, 1997; Wilcox, 2007) transposes his ideas about how he wants a woman to look onto the body of a woman by encasing her in uncomfortable corsetry and underpinnings. In contrast a female designer such as Jean Muir, discussed in paper 4

(Fisher, 2008; Muir, 1993; Soutar, 2008; Stemp, 2007) designs clothes in which a woman wants to feel both stylish and comfortable. The influence of the male gaze was further emphasised by Kawamura (2005) who noted that; "Fashion emerges out of a desire to be beautiful, the norm for which is created by men in a male-dominated society" (p.11). Wilson (1985) notes that in the majority of societies the female is predominantly allotted an inferior rank. "Fashionable dress and the beautification of the self are conventionally perceived as expressions of subordination; fashion and cosmetics fixing women visibly in their oppression" (Wilson, 1985, p.13). The findings also confirm there is a far greater female consumption of fashion resulting in more womenswear produced than menswear, giving more opportunities for women to suffer. For example consumption of fashion shows that sales of new clothing are twice as high for womenswear as for men's. The latest recorded figures for the UK are from 2010; the sales of men's clothing were £9600 million and for women it was £19041 million (Mintel<sub>a</sub>, 2012 and Mintel<sub>b</sub>, 2012). The above are the avenues I focus upon within this commentary as many of the research themes in the papers arose from my own experience, located as a womenswear designer.

## **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The aim of the research programme was to develop a deep understanding of the concept of suffering within a fashion context and how this can initiate change in the design and production of garments so they can be reassembled in new and challenging ways. In writing the commentary, the objectives were to reflect on the submitted publications, personal experience and practice and identify further fashion research and knowledge based on the disparate manifestations of suffering within fashion.

In developing the publications, I learnt a great deal about the process of research. I began in a very instinctive way through the research for the first publication. This drew on my experiences as a fashion designer and lecturer. I focused on action and object based research, examining the construction details of garments from student and museum collections that altered the natural shape of the body causing discomfort. Secondary research came from books and journal articles that investigated how the body has been distorted through fashionable clothing. I began to identify further issues related to suffering that initiated changes within the fashion industry. In order to develop my ideas I started to discover more about the many different methodological approaches to research, particularly within art and design (Maner, 1999; Goldenberg 2004; Grey and Malins, 2004; Foster and Zaccagnini Flynn, 2009). This enabled me to understand how to apply these methods to my own research questions. I began to discover what people had achieved within the field of fashion research. In the preceding 20 years there has been much debate about the study of fashion as a viable academic research topic (Riberio, 1998; Tseelon, 2002; Taylor, 2004; Kawamura, 2006; Foster and Zaccagnini Flynn, 2009; Kawamura, 2011). There appears to be a divide between scholars/research professionals and practitioners. In this commentary, I have attempted to locate myself within the field of fashion research by bringing together what I identified as two disparate approaches to analyzing fashion, the theoretical/philosophical and the practical/industrial, in order to investigate relationships between suffering, fashion garment production and consumption.

Much of the research throughout the publications was from a qualitative approach working with small groups of students and fashion consumers. (Creswell, 2003; Yin 2003; Flick, et al, 2004; Grey and Malins, 2004; Taylor, 2004; Trumbull, 2005; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Neuman, 2010; Kawamura, 2011). These methods are generally appropriate when searching for the meaning that events/things hold for people, as Corbin and Strauss (2008, p.12) explained: “Qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables”. This produced specific, in-depth information about the individual issues within the publications and assisted in formulating generalized theories, which could inspire future research. Kawamura described it as: “An inductive process of building from data to broad themes to a generalized model or theory” (2011, p.22). My approach was grounded in my reflections and experience as a design and pattern-cutting tutor and so this focused on small groups or the individual. It is qualitative because the enquiry is focused upon intensive involvement with fashion designers and consumers in their natural environment and the opinions of small groups of people and niche fashion markets connected to the research questions within specific levels of time, space and numbers of people. Consideration of the general perspective of the fashion industry was gained through primary research at relevant conferences, seminars, trade shows, retail outlets and secondary research in relevant books, journals and the Internet.

I discovered there are many ways of collecting data. The methodologies adopted throughout the papers allowed me to identify characteristics or contextual locations in which to observe and reflect on language, signs and meanings holistically. I also discovered that different methods are good for different purposes and the researcher must carefully choose the appropriate method for what they want to find out. As the process of developing the research and reading about research methods evolved I began to develop a better understanding of methodologies and how to select those most appropriate to the different research questions related to suffering in fashion.

**Object-Based Research** – I conducted object-based research in papers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9. The aim was to understand the impact degrees of suffering had on the physical

nature of garments in terms of design, construction and silhouette. This was cross-referenced with literature that considered the intellectual and social value of fashion garments: (Steele, 1998; Taylor, 1998; Taylor, 2004). For example, paper 1 compared vintage designer and fashion student garments in order to facilitate an in-depth knowledge about clothes that have distorted the body and the physical discomfort this creates. Paper 4 examined the work of Jean Muir comparing the designer's garments with those of students in order to embarrass students into recognizing the importance of professional standards in garment production. The objects analyzed in both papers demonstrate how stratas of physical pain, through bodily distortion and mental pain through embarrassment, influence cycles of change in garment design and construction.

**Ethnographic Research** - I participated in ethnographic research in papers: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9. This allowed me to gain a close familiarity with stratas of physical and mental suffering and their impact on the fashion industry through direct observation, informal interviews, collective discussions and intensive involvement with practitioners and consumers in their natural environment. The research settings included sub cultural groups, occupational and cultural communities, observed through attending fashion orientated clubs, fashion shows, conferences, retail outlets and working in the fashion studio. For example, in paper 8 I observed and participated in two LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) nightclubs. I was able to compare the fashioned bodies of the clubber's reconstructed selves with the conflict suffered in their everyday lives. By cross referencing the ethnography with literature from scholars who have analyzed the culture and significance of nightclubs (Grazian, 2008; Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Northcote, 2006; Owen, 2003; Redhead, 2008; Smith, 2008; Thornton, 1995) it allowed me to establish how the clubbers aesthetic reconstruction is appropriated by the fashion industry into liberated items that change the direction of mainstream fashion. In contrast I participated in ethnographic environments in paper 6, both as a tutor and as a pattern cutter within the fashion industry. Cross referencing this research with literature that examined fashion technology (Aldrich, 2008; Duburg/Van der Tol, 2008; Fischer, 2008; Hollingworth, 1996; Karimzadeh, 1999) allowed me to examine the significance of the technical role of pattern cutting and how these highly creative skills move fashion forwards



with their interpretation of new and innovative designs. Both examples in papers 6 and 8 helped to build up a variety of surveillance with which to reflect on people's reactions to strata's of physical and mental suffering and how they can influence the way fashionable clothes are made, consumed and appropriated.

iii) **Action Research** – I participated in action research in papers 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9 the aim was to instigate a cyclical method of planning, observing, evaluating, critical reflection and taking action before planning the next cycle. For example, in paper 3, I actively participated in the physical process of making something new from something old. The aim was to understand the levels of deprivation fashion suffered in times of economic crisis and how fashionable clothes can be created on a small budget. By cross-referencing this with literature that examined the deprivation fashion production suffered in World War Two and the economic decline beginning in 2008 (Eben, 2005; Foley, 2008; Lonsdale, 2009; McDowell, 1997; Tavangari, 2010; Wilson, 2009) I used this methodology in a new context as the results contributed to my knowledge of how fashionable clothes can be designed and produced when the fashion industry suffers economic decline.

iv) **Semi-structured Interviews** – I conducted semi-structured interviews. In papers 1, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9, I tested individual's understanding of suffering in relation to the research questions within the paper. Interviewees included fashion students, academics, costume curators, designers and fashion consumers. The questions were flexible allowing new questions and ideas to be brought up as a result of what the interviewee said. For example in paper 6 I interviewed eight final year fashion students to discuss individual philosophies towards creative pattern cutting and its importance to their work. The findings revealed varied ideas and concepts, which highlighted both a creative and technical perspective. Triangulating this with object-based research and the literature review built up of variety of evidence, which supported the creative integrity of pattern cutting and its value to the fashion industry. This reinforced my suggestion that the marginalized role suffered by technologists within the fashion industry be considered of equitable importance to the more celebrated role of the designer.

v) **Exemplar Case Studies** – I conducted case studies in papers 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9 through in-depth investigation of individuals, groups and events. For example, in paper 9 I used this methodology in a new context by identifying four key issues directly related to suffering within contemporary fashion. Acknowledged in the literature review these were (i) fashion victims, (ii) slimming the body, (iii) fashion and morality and (iv) masquerade and disguise. My aim was to distinguish how these issues related to the way clothes are produced and the skills necessary to produce them. The use of this methodology was triangulated with object-based research, which examined how the issues physically embodied themselves in the design and production of fashionable clothes. This proved instrumental to identifying direct connections between suffering and the way it can initiate change within the creation and consumption of fashion. The clothes transpose the four concepts of suffering into contemporary fashion issues directly related to skills in design and production.

As discussed, methods throughout the papers were often triangulated as this strengthened the research investigations. Different data captured information from different perspectives yet often arrived at similar results. I also developed skills as a qualitative researcher that enabled me to build a rapport with participants from varied backgrounds such as academia and fashion consumers. The triangulation of research methods and the results of each paper, sequentially built up a body of knowledge related to suffering in fashion. It also identified little research related to the impact of suffering on changes in fashion production and consumption.

A substantial literature review was the principal secondary research context adopted and areas examined were fashion theory, history and technology.

vi) **Fashion Theory** – I considered the emerging viability of fashion as an academic research topic and the critical analysis of fashion undertaken by scholars. This established a breadth of understanding about the cultural significance of the dressed body. It also helped to establish the wider context of human suffering with the perceptions about what constitutes a ‘fashioned body’, or how a body is decorated to conform to fashion’s demands and the suffering this entails.

vii) **Fashion History** – I considered past and present events in the context of both the present and the future as it allowed me to reflect upon and suggest possible answers to current fashion issues. In the publications, research into the history of fashion allowed me to consider questions about cyclical and spiral relationships related to suffering in fashion, i.e. investigating where does suffering come from, where is suffering now and what sort of suffering will there be in the future?

viii) **Fashion Technology** – I considered literature related to fashion technology and the skills in making clothes such as pattern cutting, sewing, manufacture, computerized manufacture etc. Analysis of how changes in fashion that related to suffering impacted on the skills of making clothes was also investigated.

The following section begins by analyzing the findings of each publication. This reveals how disparate experiences of suffering influenced changes in the way fashionable clothes are manufactured and consumed. The publications form the main body of ideas evaluated in order to assess relationships between suffering, the production of garments and their appropriation as fashionable items. As the research progressed, a sequential pattern developed. It began with the research question; establishing issues; collecting data; analyzing data; taking action; evaluating the results of the action and formulating new questions.

## **6. NOTES ON THE PUBLICATIONS PRESENTED**

This discussion is split into three sections that link together. The first analyses the findings of each publication chronologically established in relation to literature and methods of analysis. This incrementally illustrates how the contribution to knowledge began to manifest through the cycles of suffering and change discussed. It also identifies strata's of severity in suffering within each paper. This enabled me to reflect on the wider meaning of suffering beyond fashion establishing the four concepts described in the second section in which suffering may be regarded as a part of life, a pre-requisite for hope, a force for change and a source of creativity. I also recognized that the individual themes of the papers are concerned with at least one of these concepts. The final section discusses paper 9. This analyzed the submitted publications and literature to identify key issues of suffering within contemporary fashion that directly influence change to the production and consumption of fashionable items.

### **(a) Publications submitted**

The research questions in each paper reflect the perspectives of the journals in which they are published ranging from: the historical, theoretical, technological and pedagogical. The findings of each paper were established in relation to relevant literature and methods of analysis. What I discovered in each paper was used to inform both the contribution to knowledge and my developing knowledge of research methodologies. As emphasized in section 5 it illustrates my journey as a researcher, which began instinctively and revealed to me the many different research approaches I could adopt and triangulate when investigating different ideas related to suffering in fashion. As I suggest through the analysis of literature, suffering can empower positive innovation in the skills of clothing production and the way fashionable clothing is worn (Van Der Does, 1980; Mascia and Sharpe, 1992; Cole, 2000; Koda, 2001; Stewart and Janovicek, 2001; Jenkyn-Jones, 2002; Evans, 2003; Kawamura, 2006; Glover, 2008; Almond, 2009). In researching the relationship between garment production, bodily discomfort and suffering, the technology involved in making clothes was examined

through pattern cutting (Bray, 1986; Hollingworth, 1996; British Fashion Council, 2000; Joseph-Armstrong, 2006; Aldrich, 2007; Joseph-Armstrong, 2008), garment manufacture (Solinger, 1980; Tarrant, 1994; Coates, 1997; Schaeffer, 2001; Jenkyn-Jones, 2002; Duburg and Van der Tol, 2008; Fischer, 2009; Renfrew and Renfrew, 2009), fashion history (Wilson, 1985; Breward, 2003; Vincent 2009), and fashion theory (Goffman, 1959; Lurie, 1981; Davis, 1992; Tseelon, 1995; Entwistle, 2000; Lynch and Strauss, 2007).

The study began with paper 1 in which I discovered a small volume of literature that analyzed the pain and discomfort of body modifying clothes (Koda, 2001; Riberio, 1986; Steele, 2001; Van Der Does, 1980). The findings revealed how fashion is never satisfied with the natural silhouette and in their search for new shape designers constantly test customer's endurance of levels of physical pain through a cycle of continuous experimentation with traditional and evolving technology. This includes evaluation of ways body-modifying clothes can be manufactured to be more comfortable. Suffering levels of physical pain made me think deeply about how mental pain can influence the design and consumption of fashionable clothes. The literature review and object-based research in paper 2, identified how suffering bereavement was reflected in exaggerated Victorian mourning dress (Jalland, 1996; Jones, 1967; Morley, 1971; Stevens, 2000; Taylor, 1983; Wheeler, 1994). The findings revealed the extent and severity of bereavement was symbolized by a uniform, which changed during a two-year mourning period, as the pain of the loss gradually diminished. The cycle influenced clothing production, as the creation of mourning garments required adherence to the overstated demands in their design. This led me to further consider how suffering in fashion has been reflected by other significant changes in society. Paper 3 considered literature that explored the way fashion suffered loss and deprivation due to the withdrawal of essential manufacturing resources in World War Two and the economic recession beginning in 2008 (Armstrong, 2009; Eben, 2005; Lonsdale, 2009; McDowell, 1997; Tavangari, 2010; Wilson, 2009). The findings revealed a cycle in which fashion revisits traditional skills when manufacturing suffers from economic decline. The industry capitalizes on this to

initiate designs that will both sell and maintain interest in fashion when the industry suffers crisis.

I began to consider the role of the technologist within the fashion industry in papers 4, 5 and 6 and the physical and mental suffering workers endure through cycles of change and conflict between traditional and new technologies. Paper 4 identified literature, which discussed the technical skills necessary to produce professional garments and how difficult it is to engage fashion students in the acquisition of these skills. (Aldrich, 2008; Fischer, 2009; Hollingworth, 1996; Jenkyn Jones, 2002; Muir, 1993; Stemp, 2007). The findings considered a much-used derogatory phrase 'It looks very home dress-makey' (Burman, 1999). As discussed in section four the students suffer a mild but frequent form of embarrassment when it is leveled at them in garment fittings. This shames them into recognizing the importance of acquiring the production skills necessary to produce professionally made garments. Paper 5 analyzed literature, which focused on the bespoke tailoring industry and the conflict between the traditional hand skills of bespoke and evolving digital skills within the mass market (Amies, 1994; Creed, 1961; Harris, 1998; Howarth, 2003; Sherwood, 2010; Tarrant, 1994; Walker, 1988). The research revealed a cycle of suffering in the conflicting influences of emerging technologies and suggested the heritage of tailoring could be repositioned as a craft-based production method. The analysis of the literature in paper 6 highlighted how the technical role of the pattern cutter is frequently marginalized in respect of the more glamorous and creative role of the designer as depicted in the industry and media (Aldrich, 2008; Fischer, 2009; Hollingworth, 1996; Karimzadeh, 1999; McDonal, 2009; Rogers, 1983). The findings redressed the balance by emphasizing the significance of pattern cutting within the fashion industry and how creative technical skills are integral to cycles of garment production and consumption through their three- dimensional interpretation of new and innovative designs.

The mental suffering instigated by marginalization was further explored in papers 7 and 8 through ethnographic and case study methodologies. They considered literature that

examined how the glamorized appearance of an individual masks mental pain suffered through perceived inadequacies within the private self due to sexual and gender identity (Davies, 2001; Dyhouse, 2010; Goffman, 1959; Gundle, 2008; Jackson, 2004; Lurie, 1981; Sontag, 1966; Tseelon, 1995; Tseelon, 2001; Wilson, 2007). The findings reveal a further cycle in which the sartorial ideas presented on the fashioned bodies of the marginalized are plundered by fashion designers such as, Gaultier and Galliano and are promulgated as liberated fashionable items that change the direction of mainstream fashion production and consumption.

In the literature relating to the assessment of suffering, Frazee (2011) provides a hierarchical model of core and basic human needs, the absence of which result in suffering of various forms and degrees. The scale lists both essential and more basic human needs in an order of necessity.

**Core Human Needs**

- Healthy Food
- Clean Water
- Use of Language
- Protective Shelter
- Restorative Sleep
- Proper Sanitation
- Bodily Movement
- Pleasant Companionship
- Hope for Basic Need Fulfillment

**Basic Human Needs**

- Personal autonomy
- Physical and mental health
- Productive work
- Trusted community
- Adequate health care
- Nurturing childhood
- Significant relationships
- Physical security
- Economic security
- Safe birth control & child-bearing
- Social and technical knowledge
- Spiritual/Philosophical context

(Frazee, 2011, p.2)

This could be applied to a fashion context and to the submitted publications to assess how levels of suffering can influence change in garment production and consumption.

Consideration of Frazee's hierarchy assists in placing the examples of suffering identified in the papers in a suggested order of severity, 1 being more severe, 6 being less. Through careful consideration I recognized that some of the core and basic human needs can be mapped onto the strata of suffering I identified from 1 to 6. In placing the six examples in a suggested order of severity I tried to consider both their relationship to the literature and the overall physical and mental impact upon the level of suffering endured by individuals or fashion organizations described within the papers. The relative severity of the suffering described in each of the submitted papers was assessed by considering, in each case, the number and importance of the core and basic human needs described by Frazee that appear to be threatened.

1. Physical pain – paper 1. This could be considered in relation to both 'bodily movement' and 'physical and mental health' that contribute to levels of physical pain suffered by individuals.
2. Deprivation (loss of material resources, industry suffers loss etc.) – papers 4 and 5. This could be considered in relation to a lack of 'productive work' and 'economic security'.
3. Bereavement (grief) – paper 2. This could be considered in relation to a 'spiritual and philosophical context' and 'significant relationships' or due to a lack of 'adequate healthcare'.
4. Marginalization (due to sexuality or gender identity) – papers 7 and 8. This could be considered in relation to the absence of a 'trusted community' and 'significant relationships' and in relation to 'basic need fulfillment'.
5. Undervaluation (undervaluing pattern cutters) – paper 6. This could be considered in relation to an undervaluing of 'technical knowledge' and 'productive work' and in relation to a 'trusted community'.
6. Embarrassment (due to unprofessional garment construction skills) – paper 4. This could be considered in relation to a lack of 'technical knowledge' in relation to



‘productive work’.

Stratas or degrees of suffering do not necessarily have a linear relationship with the degree of impact upon the production and consumption of fashionable clothes and a minor level of suffering could influence major change and vice versa. For instance I suggest the most minor form of suffering is embarrassment however in assessing this, it is evident that it has a major impact on the fashion industry as it is crucial for the industry to have designers and technicians who fully understand and appreciate the need for professional garment manufacture skills in order to manage the needs of production. Without this the industry could not really operate. Alternatively marginalization, which is placed in the middle of the severity scale, has an arguably lesser impact on the fashion industry as it can result in the self re-creation gained by appropriating a new look or style. These selves can also establish new trends in fashion, which inspire new ways in which to manufacture clothes. It is of lesser impact than embarrassment as there are arguably many other things, which influence garment design however in order to produce fashionable clothes professional manufacture skills are essential.

#### **(b) The wider meaning, impact and significance of suffering**

Through reflecting upon the findings in the first eight publications, I was able to identify how the contribution to knowledge began to establish itself in different stratas of physical and mental suffering and influenced cycles of change in fashion production and consumption. This inspired an investigation into the wider meaning of suffering beyond fashion through an analysis of literature across a number of discipline areas where suffering is a key concept. These included religion and spirituality, social sciences, arts and literature, psychology, biology, philosophy and health (Schrade, 1964; Draper, 1980; Scarry, 1987; Amato, 1990; Kleinman, 1997; Bushnell, 2005; Mayerfeld, 2005). I discovered that suffering occurs in the lives of human beings in numerous ways: socially, culturally and personally. I found many of the direct references to suffering were in religion and spirituality as this often formed a basis to the meaning of life and in the Christian example of the suffering in Hell and

penance (Anon, 2004b). References in the other discipline areas emphasized individual experiences of suffering through the unpleasantness of physical and mental pain. From this research I identified four concepts that may be regarded as: (i) suffering as a part of life; (ii) suffering as a prerequisite for hope; (iii) suffering as a force for change; and (iv) suffering as a source of creativity.

This analysis of suffering clearly extends beyond the boundaries of the fashion industry. People can view the effect of suffering in a positive way. It can build strength of character with which to grow and change, both personally and professionally. When channeled into compassion for the gravity of worldwide suffering, its disillusionment and bitterness can motivate people to initiate positive change. For example, the film star Audrey Hepburn was a world-renowned fashion icon who suffered for her fashion iconicity by purportedly eating very little (allegedly living on ice-cubes) to maintain an elfin frame. In her later life, she used her status to publicize the suffering of children in her role as UNICEF ambassador and ultimately bring about change and improvement to children's lives (Spoto, 2007). The framework can therefore be applied to the issues of suffering in fashion raised within the papers in order to gain further insight. It also helps to substantiate how suffering can be a motivating factor for re-inventing the fashion product as the individual themes of the papers can be placed within at least one of the four concepts.

(i) Suffering as part of life.

Suffering is evident in many aspects of everyday life. For example Buddhism considers the 'Four Noble Truths' that are key to its philosophy, the first of which is: "The noble truth that is suffering" (Anon, 2004a, p.296). The belief is that a person cannot go through life without experiencing some sort of distress to the body and therefore to live is, partly, to suffer. The third noble truth describes the path to an enlightened state of living once suffering has been endured: "The noble truth that is the end of suffering" (Anon, 2004a, p.296). The fourth noble truth is the attainment of the ultimate state of nirvana. Alternatively, Mayerfield (2005, p.30) considered that we can be happy and suffer at the same time and that the gift of life is: "A single

dimension of happiness and suffering". Within the social sciences, Kleinman (1997) described how human suffering that is associated with the conditions of life forms authoritative social forces. This was investigated in papers 7 and 8 highlighting the suffering incurred by those who appropriated fashionable looks in the face of powerful hostilities endured as part of their everyday lives.

(ii) Suffering as a prerequisite for hope.

It could be argued that extreme suffering has the authority to instigate a hope for something better. Catholic teaching maintains that suffering strengthens faith: "We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us" (Anon, 2004b, Romans 5:1). Similarly, Hinduism decrees that suffering is an opportunity for spiritual progress. Beyond religion, disasters such as war or famine are endured with the hope for a better life when they end. In nature, the desolation of winter is often made bearable with hope for the rebirth of spring. Papers 3, 7 and 8 discussed how suffering through war, economic decline, personal insecurity and social acceptance could instigate hopeful and positive initiatives in fashion. This is reflected in social science through an investigation in the 'Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential' (UIA, 1994) which explores the notion that pain and suffering can be considered as an education that offers a new perception and awareness of the reactions to suffering.

(iii) Suffering as a force for change

When suffering becomes unendurable it can either end in extinction or it enforces change. Amato (1990) regarded the two concepts of pain and suffering as interrelated yet separate concepts, emphasizing that humanity must give meaning to its pains and sufferings. He particularly considered sacrifice and victims in Christian cultures, where redemption through suffering and penance led to a rebirth or a rethink or, in other words, change. Mayerfield (2005) considered that physical or mental suffering was something from which people sought relief, arguing that it should be a moral duty in others to alleviate pain and anguish by initiating change. In Darwin's theory of natural selection (1859) a species that cannot adapt to climate and environmental change

suffers extinction. The species that changes and adapts to its environment survives. Both papers 1 and 5 considered suffering in relation to changing skills in fashion production, emphasizing conflict between new and traditional technologies that need to be changed and adapted to enhance future production.

(iv) Suffering as a source of creativity

Throughout literature and art, suffering has been a measure of cultural identity and historical continuity. It has been engaged in by many artists, writers and fashion designers as a means of fuelling creative powers. An example is the romanticized notion of starving artists who sacrifice material well being to devote themselves to their work; for instance the artist Gericault divorced himself from society in order to indulge in a passionate frenzy of painting (Berger, 1955). Literature is often linked to suffering and tragedy. Bushnell (2005) identified tragedy as an ancient Greek concept within theatre in which human suffering offered its audience gratification and was a way to inspire creativity. The fashion designer Alexander McQueen explored suffering in his: “Aggressive aesthetic plunge into the darkest recesses of the soul” (Knox, 2010, p.7) through which themes such as rape, capital punishment and witchcraft were transformed into chic visions. His design aesthetic was also attributed to the depression he suffered, which eventually contributed to his suicide. Both papers 1 and 6 emphasized how suffering through physical and mental pain has inspired creativity in fashion design both through the wearing of uncomfortable clothes and in re-positioning the often marginalized role of the pattern cutter as a dominant creative force.

The final section discusses paper 9 and its analysis of the submitted publications and literature identifying key issues of suffering within contemporary fashion related to the production of garments and their appropriation as fashionable items. It also assisted in forming the theoretical ideas discussed in section 7, which begin to form the contribution to knowledge.

**(c) Paper 9; 'Suffering for fashion: The links that expose issues for the future production of garments and their appropriation as fashionable items'.**

I decided to write paper 9 using some of the ideas I had begun to explore in writing this commentary. The findings from the first eight publications identified stratas of physical and mental suffering that influence cycles of change in fashion production and consumption. I considered that publishing this additional paper would begin to consolidate my ideas. The findings of this paper suggest that suffering in the fashion industry is a beneficial source and the well from which change and creative ideas can spring. In order to emphasize how issues of suffering are inherent within the industry I identified four key issues that directly related to the frequency and extent of suffering within contemporary fashion. They were (i) fashion victims; (ii) slimming the body; (iii) fashion and morality; and (iv) masquerade and disguise. These were categorized as major topical debates within numerous articles in the fashion press; (Vogue (English, American, French, and Italian), WWD, Drapers, Elle, Glamour, Tatler etc.). They were also issues explored by authors and scholars in fashion theory (Massala, 1930; Van Der Does, 1980; Tseelon, 1995; Wallerstein, 1998; Arnold, 1999a; Arnold, 1999b; Boultonwood, 2000; Entwistle, 2000; Featherstone, 2000; Davies, 2001, Leeks, et al, 2001; Stewart and Janovicek, 2001; Targett, 2001; Tseelon, 2001; Riberio, 2003; Glover, 2008; Vincent, 2009; Schiemer, 2010; Siegle, 2011). My aim was to identify how these issues related to the way clothes are produced and the skills necessary to produce them. As a fashion design tutor I decided to analyze student work in order to consider if and how the identified fashion issues had impacted upon their designs and if suffering was subsequently a motivating factor for re-inventing fashion products and the ways they are manufactured. To emphasize this, I linked each issue with one of the four concepts of suffering, (i) life, (ii) hope, (iii) change and (iv) creativity, in order to discuss and test this theory. The findings from this analysis helped me to identify direct connections between suffering and the way it can initiate change within the creation and consumption of fashionable clothes. The fashion collections transpose the four concepts of suffering into contemporary fashion issues related to skills in design and production.

## **7. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION**

The theoretical contribution discussed in this section is posited as a tentative idea suggesting there is a spiral relationship between changes in fashion production and consumption resulting from suffering. This evolves into a spiral of further suffering affecting future fashion design and production. The discussion is split into two sections that link together. The first discusses direct connections between suffering, its effect on the fashion industry and how it impacts on design and production, detailing these links implicit within the submitted papers. The second proposes a theoretical model depicting the connections between suffering and fashion.

### **(a) Suffering in the fashion industry and fashion production**

In the discussion throughout sections 4 and 6, the research undertaken to date illustrates how stratas of suffering could be viewed as a trigger for the ever-evolving fashion product and suffering as the well from which creativity can spring. It identified issues related to suffering within fashion and possible causal relationships with the design, production and consumption of fashionable garments. Throughout the research, I have also identified how stratas of suffering can manifest themselves within the fashion industry. My next concern was to consider how my research relates to existing concerns within fashion. Through my examination of fashion literature, I identified the four significant fashion issues discussed in paper 9: (i) fashion victims, (ii) slimming the body, (iii) fashion and morality, (iv) masquerade and disguise. These are examined in relation to the four concepts of suffering around which the research in this commentary is structured: (i) as a part of life, (ii) as a prerequisite for hope, (iii) as a force for change, and (iv) as a source of creativity. My concern here is to initiate a new analytical insight into these debates within fashion by placing them within the framework of these four overarching concepts of suffering. In paper 9 the four concepts of suffering are related to the aforementioned fashion issues directly related to suffering that have also impacted on fashion design and production within the student collections. The fashion collections illustrate how the four concepts of

suffering are manifested through the key fashion issues identified in the literature, which relate to skills in the design and production of fashionable clothes.

The connections between the wider concepts of suffering, suffering in fashion and its impact on the skills of garment making show how suffering can be intrinsic to change in industry. This can be illustrated through the following examples. The fashion victim is a follower of fashion whose appearance suffers through their sartorial mistakes. This relates to the concept of suffering as a part of life. The victim's slavish devotion to fashion becomes part of their life; they shape their body through "The social hazards of fashion dynamics as these are perceived by the great majority in contemporary western society" (Schiemer, 2010, p.84). The overdressing of the fashion victim influences fashion design which affects fashion production. For example, fashion students at University of Huddersfield were asked to design an outfit that celebrated the fashion victim's over worked approach to dress. This impacted on garment making as students had to incorporate an abundance of techniques in their construction; these included corsetry, boning, embroidery, ruching, sheering, crinoline construction, tassels, bra making, canvassing, draping, tailoring, studs, cutting trains, using difficult fabrics such as feathers, gathers etc. These many techniques also contributed to the garments being extremely cumbersome to wear. Another example is masquerade and disguise and its relationship to suffering and creativity. The concept of masquerade suggests that through disparate levels of suffering including guilt, stigma, bullying and social displacement, an individual can create an alternative self through a disguised performance. The disguise of the body with unisex styles has been appropriated by fashion as a major global trend. The fashion student responded to this by creating a non-gendered collection that resulted in both sexes being able to share an entire outfit and adjusting it to their own personal style. This impacted on skills in garment making, as she had to develop pattern blocks that would fit both a standard female size 12 and male size 38 and amalgamated the dual sizes into one set of unisex blocks and subsequent pattern development and grading. The widespread adoption of this as a fashionable look could impact on global production

as there would need to be a radical and creative rethink of gendered pattern blocks and sizing.

The fashion issues related to suffering ((i) fashion victims, (ii) slimming the body, (iii) fashion and morality, (iv) masquerade and disguise) are implicit within the other submitted papers although in different ways and relate to the broader issues of suffering (life, hope, change and creativity). This can be illustrated through the example of masquerade and disguise, which is closely related to each of the four broader issues of suffering. For those who experience marginalization due to their sexuality or gender identity, suffering through discrimination and prejudice can truly be described as an ever-present 'part of life'. In masquerade, they have the chance to appropriate an idealized persona through the adoption of visual props such as clothing, wigs, accessories and make-up. This disguises and ultimately changes their appearance through their creation of an idealized self. Thus the suffering behind masquerade becomes a spur to hoping for, and reaching for an 'accepted self'. Paper 8 investigates how marginalized people are provided with a supportive opportunity to present glamorized selves in a nightclub environment and emphasizes how these environments can often become potent sources for change and creativity for fashion designers. They appropriate ideas from masquerade and re-interpret them as mainstream ideas for the fashionable consumer. Thus the suffering of those marginalized people who seek out the club environment ultimately leads to change and creativity.

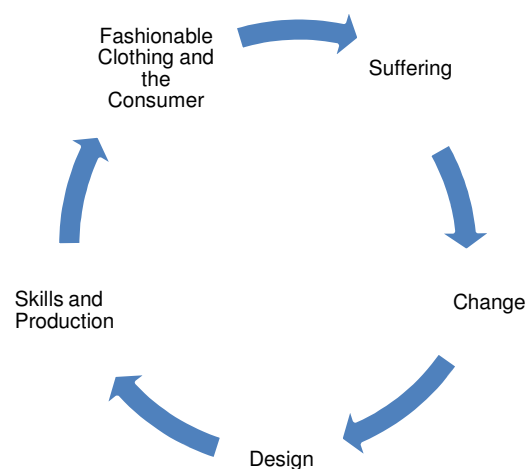
A cycle begins to emerge that emphasizes five concepts that interlink: suffering can initiate changes in design so that the skills in making clothes need to be reviewed in order to produce fashionable clothing for the consumer. It can then initiate further suffering in the use and testing of new technologies with which to make clothes so that the cycle begins again. These changes suggest evolutions in fashion production and consumption resulting from suffering produces further suffering so that evolutions in fashion production and consumption continue.



### **(b) Models depicting the connections between suffering and fashion**

Through the ages, people have suffered for fashion, which has caused significant change in styles, yet there are always examples of suffering that do not necessarily cause change. It could be argued that the wearers of uncomfortable shoes for example will not necessarily change them, as it would compromise their 'fashioned self'. However as the different issues discussed in the publications illustrate, on the whole suffering does lead to significant changes in fashion production and consumption. The five concepts: suffering, change, design, skills and production, fashionable clothing and the consumer are arranged in the cycle in figure 1 below. This cycle is evidenced in some of the submitted papers, for instance paper 3 described how fashion suffered in World War Two due to the withdrawal of essential manufacturing resources. This enforced changes in the ways clothes were designed as makers had to revisit the skills of traditional technologies in order to produce fashionable clothing for the consumer. Paper 4 described how students suffer embarrassment in garment fittings when the tutor says: "It looks very home dress-makey". The phrase is intentionally derogatory, as it implies that the garment appears unprofessional in order to help the student understand the changes they must make to the design of the garment and the importance in mastering the skills needed to produce fashionable clothing for the consumer.

Fig 1. Cyclical relationship of suffering and fashion



The fashion product changes seasonally however and does not return to the same form; therefore the relationship could be described as spiral rather than cyclical. The example of the design process model in figure 2 proposed by Zeisel (1984) is used to inspire the model proposed in figure 3. However the conceptual shifts are changes that take place in the production and consumption of clothing. This “domain of acceptable responses” (Zeisel, 1984, p.6) is rooted in fashion and the consecutive image-present-test cycles represent the spiral of reactions to forms of suffering. “Designers aim to reach one acceptable level of response within a range of acceptable solutions. This domain of acceptance is measured largely by how well a product adapts to its environment” (Zeisel, 1984, p.6).

Fig 2. Zeisel’s Design Development Spiral (1984)

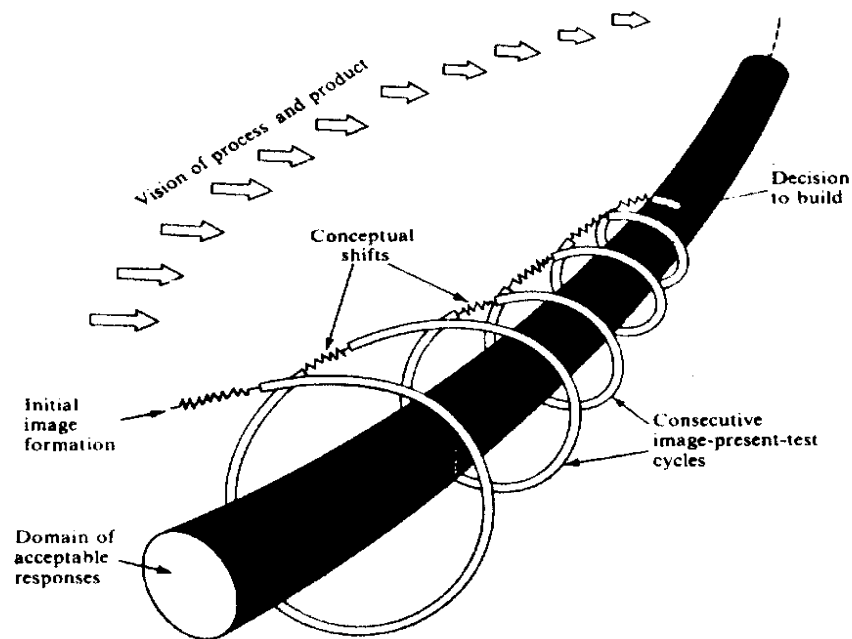
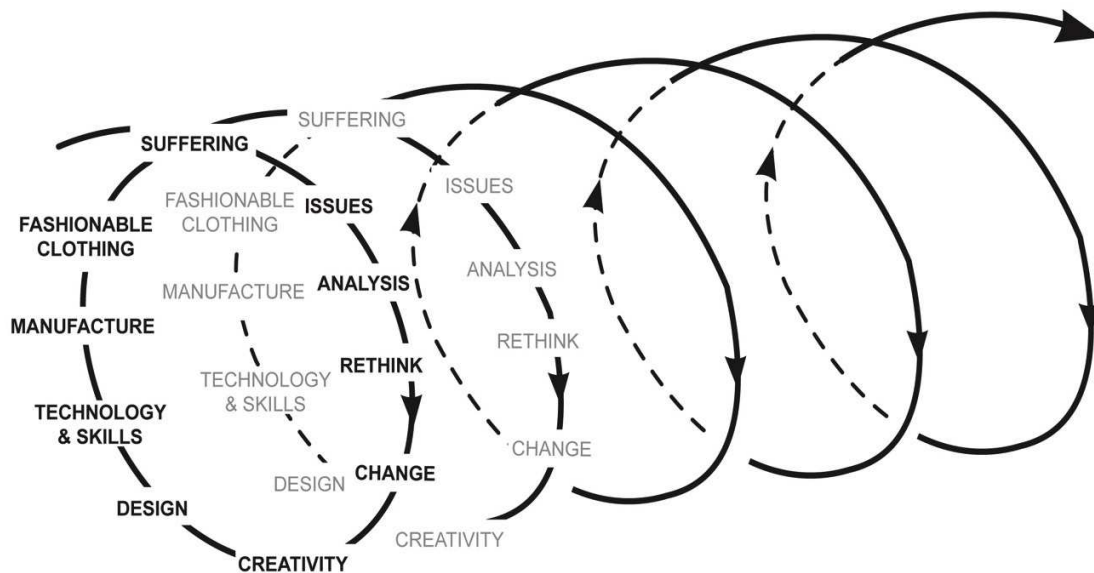


Fig 3. Spiral relationship of suffering and fashion



In Figure 3 I draw on the key features of the Zeisel spiral to illustrate how changes in fashion design and production are a spiraling process in which solutions are sequentially arrived at through a series of responses to suffering. This then forms my own analysis that demonstrates how the fashion product adapts to change. The fashion product does not return to the same form and can initiate further suffering through the testing of new technologies and through its appropriation as a fashionable item. The concepts of suffering, change, design, skills and production, fashionable clothing and the consumer in the cyclical diagram are expanded in the spiral to further detail the sequences of change: suffering, issues identified, analysis of issues, rethink, change, creativity through use of design, technology and skills initiating change in the manufacture of fashionable clothing for the consumer. Once a solution is identified, it is tested against the original problem or set of objectives before being rejected or re-imaged to further refine the solution. This spiraling process of imaging, testing and re-imaging in figure 3 relies on the adequate flow of information as a means to inspire the creative process and to test ideas. Although the spiral describes how suffering impacts on changes in the production of fashionable garments it could also relate to other aspects of suffering within fashion, for instance in the decline of

UK manufacture or in the industries use of anorexic models etc. In removing the words relating to fashion, the theory could also apply to other sectors of the creative industries suggesting avenues for further research.

## **8. CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

Although positive initiatives such as ambition or a desire to progress and evolve (as in Darwin's theories) effect change, this research suggests change can be rooted in anguish, dissatisfaction and the resultant search for something better. Suffering is something people want to relieve as Mayerfeld (2005, p.21) discussed: "People plunged into deep misery will always recognize the nature of their condition and struggle mightily to get out". Paper 9 discusses this, relating it to consumer unhappiness with fashion products that in turn inspires the industry to improve design and manufacture. In relation to these ideas about change and improvement, I was able to further reflect on the submitted publications and identified the five research questions detailed below:

- (i) In the context of fashion, can suffering be instrumental in enforcing the reinvigoration of the product when clothing styles are pushed to the limits of consumer endurance?
- (ii) Have the changes initiated through suffering altered the way that clothes are constructed and produced?
- (ii) Have the changes initiated new ways of maintaining and developing the skills necessary to produce the clothes.
- (iv) Is there a spiral relationship between suffering and changes in fashion production and consumption? Does this produce further suffering so the spiral relationship is renewed?
- (v) Does the concept of suffering in fashion suggest further ideas for fashion and creative industry related research?

I consider each question sequentially, linking it to the publications and the four concepts of suffering identified in section 6. These connect to the disparate experiences of suffering including stratas of physical and mental pain, displacement, loss and conflict, which influence change in the ways fashionable clothes are produced and consumed.

*In the context of fashion, can suffering be instrumental in enforcing the reinvigoration of the product when clothing styles are pushed to the limits of consumer endurance?*

The commentary considers that through suffering the body can empower positive change through its adornment. This was discussed in papers 2 and 8. Both examined stratas of suffering incurred by those who appropriated fashionable looks due to hostilities endured in their lives. Clothing was pushed to extremes both through exaggerated mourning dress and in outrageous club wear. These were clothes that either demanded a complex approach to design and manufacture or a level of risk in appropriating cross gender or experimental outfits that demanded a rethink in terms of fit and body shape. I therefore emphasize that pushing the 'fashioned body' to limits of endurance, through suffering, undermines its order so it needs to be re-assembled in a new way for it to survive. This enforces changes to skills in garment production in order to re-invigorate the product around the seasonal basis in which the fashion industry operates.

*Have the changes initiated through suffering altered the way that clothes are constructed and produced?*

This question was addressed in papers 3 and 6 as both specifically considered skills in clothing manufacture. It is also referred to less directly within the other publications. Paper 3 investigated how the fashion industry has suffered a redundancy in manufacturing during periods of economic decline, which led to a reconsideration of traditional clothing technologies. Paper 6 examined how the pattern cutter's skills suffer marginalization in relation to those of the designer yet are essential in order to create garments. These issues have been identified by organizations such as Skillset. Redundancy in UK manufacturing enforced Skillset to launch a positive campaign to retain skills in UK fashion education in order to enrich the quality of UK production. This strengthens the future for UK manufacture within global production. It could also determine a future focus for stratas of suffering to manifest themselves, impacting on the way fashionable clothing is produced and the testing of evolving technologies in their production.

*Have the changes initiated new ways of maintaining and developing the skills necessary to produce the clothes?*

Both papers 7 and 8 consider how presenting the 'fashioned body' can instigate the stratas of mental suffering endured through ridicule or hostility caused by the way a person chooses to look. Over designed, styled and exaggerated looks, however, inspire fashion designers to plunder ideas and appropriate them as liberated fashionable items within the mainstream. This demands a rethink of both design and manufacture in order to develop new skills necessary to produce clothes as commercial entities. For instance in order to produce the unisex clothing inspired by cross-gender dressing described in paper 9, new ways of cutting garments in one size for both male and female bodies has to be considered. The revived 'Make do and Mend' campaign from World War Two, described in paper 3, ensured that traditional clothing manufacture skills needed to be revived and adapted to meet contemporary demands. Paper 5 examined tensions suffered between traditional, evolving and new skills, yet emphasized the importance of preserving heritage and balancing it with the benefits of new technology. In paper 4 traditional clothing manufacture skills are celebrated as a means of emphasizing to fashion students the importance of professional standards in the production of garments. This is also discussed in paper 1 which considers how the body suffers pain through the construction of clothing that distorts its shape; suggesting new methods of manufacture to retain shape yet remain comfortable to wear. Suffering has also inspired creativity within fashion production. The creative pattern cutter considered in paper 6 suffers marginalization due to being considered second fiddle to the designer yet their skills will creatively interpret designer ideas into three dimensions. By appropriating a thorough understanding of garment technology the student and fashion professional can learn how to use these skills to enhance creativity.

*Is there a spiral relationship between suffering and changes in fashion production and consumption? Does this produce further suffering so the spiral relationship is renewed?*

The spiral relationship inspired by the Zeisel (1984) model suggests that changes in fashion production and consumption resulting from stratas of suffering produce further suffering that could impact on the future of fashionable clothing. This is described as a continuous, evolving cycle. It has an affinity with Darwin's ideas about evolution in that a species gradually evolves, yet never into its original form. Papers 4 and 5 explicitly illustrate a spiral relationship in which traditional clothing manufacture skills are re-evaluated due to conflict with new technologies. New technologies however need to be tested on the evolving fashion product, which can induce further levels of suffering. In a less direct way this theory is explored within publications such as paper 1 which demonstrates how reconstructing vintage garments into fashionable items must include the testing of new technologies used to make the clothes. As fashion products change continuously never returning to the same form the technology employed in the identified garments can be continuously updated to make clothes that are comfortable to wear.

*Does the concept of suffering in fashion suggest further ideas for both fashion and creative industry related research?*

Suffering is emphasized as an amalgamation of stratas of disparate distressing experiences that can influence change within fashion. On the surface, this does not link directly to skills in garment making. Ultimately the research identifies two concepts/ideas that (i) suffering can influence change in the way fashionable clothes are designed and worn and (less obviously) (ii), it influences the way clothing is produced and the skills that need to be maintained or developed in order to produce them. In the future as the world changes and new and different forms of suffering occur, consideration of the positive and negative effects in the relationship between suffering, the fashion industry and the consumer could form a comparative yardstick with which to measure change. This relates to the design of clothes; how they become appropriated as fashionable items and the technology in garment production that evolves in order to accommodate consumer demand. In this way, it could generate further ideas for research.



It would appear that each research question had relevance to the investigation yet addressing each question invites further research and new questions. For instance: (i) without suffering how would fashion change and what would cause this change and (ii) could the changes in fashion design and production that evolve in the spiral relationship become so refined that it becomes impossible to initiate further change from suffering? For inspiration, fashion designers have frequently plundered design themes that relate to suffering: witchcraft, rape, fear, death, gothic, war, etc (Arnold, 1999b; Knox, 2010; Knox, 2010; Ribeiro, 2003; 1996; Steele, 2001). Throughout my literature review, however, I identified little research that considered how stratas of suffering relate to fashion changes. I therefore believe that the ideas generated contribute to new knowledge that can be explored in future research by others and myself.

As discussed in the methodology there has been much recent debate about the study of fashion as a viable academic research topic. There is a strong divide between scholars/research professionals and practitioners. Suffering for fashion has brought together the two disparate approaches to analyzing fashion, the theoretical/philosophical and the practical/industrial, in order to investigate the relationships between suffering, garment production and their appropriation as fashionable items. There is suspicion within both camps: the practitioner would question the credibility of the scholar who writes about fashion yet has little experience in designing and making clothes. Likewise, the scholar is suspicious of the practitioner who attempts to write and theorize about clothes. The spiral relationship has been arrived at from a practitioner's perspective yet it relates to design process theories from analysts who consider the way a designer thinks (Lawson, 1980; Ambrose, 2011; Cross, 2011; Lawson, 2011). These theories base their understanding on evidence from observation and investigation of design practice, designers at work and interviews with designers. I have tried to discuss the process of fashion design and production from a hands-on perspective in order to arrive at a similar point. I believe this methodology has added credibility with fashion educators and the wider design industry because the research results have been arrived at from practical experience. I also believe there is a

lot further to go with this marrying of the scholarly and the practical and it could be an exciting methodology used in the future analysis of fashion issues.

My current research explores one of the fashion issues connected to suffering identified in paper 9: sizing and body shape. It investigates whether describing a person as voluptuous could be a more palatable way to repackage the plus-sized body, shrouding prejudices towards it with regards to the selection of fashionable clothing. The spiral of suffering, issues, analysis, rethink, change, creativity, design, technology, skills, manufacture and fashionable clothing is considered in relation to prejudice and negativity towards the overweight (Sproles and Burns, 1994). A larger-sized person suffers through issues of prejudice which initiates an analysis and rethink in order to change the design of larger-sized clothing through the technology and skills in garment manufacture that repackage the fuller-sized body in fashionable clothing for a voluptuous consumer. This paper was accepted for publication in *The Journal of Fashion Theory* on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012, therefore it was too late to include it as part of this commentary. I include the typed version of this paper at the end of this thesis as paper 10 to demonstrate the direction of my research. I aim to continue the methodology related to the spiral of suffering within both my research and teaching as a means to inspire the creative process, test ideas and inspire my creative peers. The spiral of suffering could also prompt further fashion industry research looking more specifically at the work of individual designers, the construction of particular garments or at fashion education. As discussed it could also be applied to the wider creative industries.

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